*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Katherine Craven, Chair, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:** | October 18, 2022 (Updated November 10, 2022) |
| **Subject:** | Commissioner's Goals and Objectives for School Year 2022-23 |

**Introduction**

This year at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department or DESE), we are focused on deepening our support for districts and schools as they continue working to accelerate student learning and recover learning losses experienced during the pandemic. We were encouraged to see that 2022 MCAS scores showed improvement in math and science from the prior year; however, scores declined in English language arts. Across all three subject areas, it may take a few years to return to pre-pandemic achievement levels.

Accelerating learning to support student recovery is a critical overarching priority for DESE this year. DESE will continue to offer robust supports to accelerate learning and close opportunity gaps, including resources and professional development opportunities for school and district teams to meet the needs of all learners in their daily instruction as well as targeted learning opportunities for students across the Commonwealth.

In addition to supporting accelerated learning, we are committed to advancing our work in other priority areas, including diversifying the educator workforce through cohort-based programs, targeted grant opportunities, and revised expectations for educator preparation programs, and cultivating safe and healthy learning environments by focusing on student mental and behavioral health, COVID-19 supports, and other health and safety matters.

I have also asked the DESE Leadership Cabinet to take a stronger role this year in coordinating and integrating our initiatives around a shared academic vision aligned to deeper learning. This will strengthen our ability to support districts and schools in implementing effective strategies for student success.

Across each of our initiatives, family engagement is an essential for success. We held a statewide summit on strengthening family-school partnerships in late October and are committed to thoughtfully engaging families throughout the year as we pursue the initiatives outlined below.

Finally, while not referenced explicitly in the goals below, DESE will continue to support districts and schools with effective implementation of recent policies passed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), including support with the changes to the Competency Determination standard and enhancements to the Educational Proficiency Plan for students in the classes of 2026 and beyond.

These goals were presented at the meeting of the BESE on October 25, 2022 and revised thereafter based on feedback from BESE members. DESE will provide updates on these priorities during the year, including more information about measuring and reporting progress.

**Summary of Priorities**

For the 2022-23 school year, I have directed DESE leadership and staff to focus on the following priorities:

* Provide Supports to Accelerate Student Learning
* Build a Diverse and Culturally Responsive Workforce
* Cultivate Safe and Healthy Learning Environments
* Align DESE Supports to a Shared Academic Vision of Deeper Learning

**Provide Supports to Accelerate Student Learning**

DESE will work with districts and schools to support all students with rigorous, grade-appropriate instruction; promote a sense of belonging in school; and provide additional opportunities for accelerated learning outside the school day.

**1. High-quality instructional materials and professional learning.** The Department will:

* Offer a $20 million grant program for districts to implement high-quality instructional materials and promote access for all students to culturally responsive, grade appropriate instruction.
  + The grant supports districts to enact a comprehensive equity-driven curriculum implementation plan, including a district-based curriculum analysis, funding for professional development for educators, and access to an expert implementation consultant for ongoing, onsite support.
  + Supportive resources include Appleseeds, a comprehensive suite of curricular materials for foundational reading skills that DESE developed and released in 2022.
* Provide support for 20 districts through a cross-district network in evaluating and selecting high-quality instructional materials and additional funding opportunities.
* Continue to work directly with educators to identify additional high-quality instructional materials for district use by convening review panels for English Language Arts 9-12, Digital Literacy and Computer Science K-12, and Science; and partner in developing and piloting high-quality materials where limited options exist in the areas of science (piloting high school course curricula in 5 districts) and history / social studies (expanding pilot to 38 districts).
* Continue and expand Open Access Professional Learning (OAPL) to offer professional development in high-quality literacy and science instruction to approximately 2,000 additional teachers across both content areas.
* Collect and publish statewide data on local curricula in use on School and District Profiles.

**2. Early literacy.** The Department will continue to support districts and schools in adopting strong early literacy practices, including:

* Support implementation of the new Early Literacy Screening regulation that the Board adopted in September 2022. The Department completed review and approval of seven screening assessments in spring 2022 and has also identified resources to support district selection decisions. During SY 2022-23, DESE will provide new implementation guidance, resources, and a third round of funding to support districts to purchase and use an approved early literacy screening assessment.
* Continue implementation support for the Mass Literacy Guide, including educator learning networks and an online course that any Massachusetts educator can take for free.
* Continue grant programs to promote effective literacy practices, including:
  + Add a second cohort of approximately 80 schools to the Growing Literacy Across Massachusetts (GLEAM) program, an intensive district and school literacy program funded by a five-year, $19.98 million federal grant to support literacy in grades preK-12 and expand preschool literacy. Since 2020, GLEAM has helped eight districts serving grades preK-5 and ten districts serving grades 6-12 implement sustainable improvements in literacy, including rigorous curricula, professional development, and access to high-quality preschool.
  + Support strong early literacy practices in 28 schools through the Early Grades Literacy grant, an effort to increase student proficiency in reading in the early grades through extensive professional development and onsite coaching in evidence-based practices.
* Institute new expectations and supports for educator preparation programs to align the preparation of teacher candidates with the principles of evidence-based early literacy instruction outlined in the Mass Literacy Guide.

**3. Deeper learning.** The Department will build on initial projects to expand deeper learning practices in the Kaleidoscope network and advance deeper learning practices statewide:

* Launch a Deeper Learning Educator Network that will be open to districts statewide. In this network, schools and districts will strengthen their use of high-quality instructional materials through the lens of deeper learning, cultivate deeper learning practices, and identify systems-level actions to foster sustainable change. School teams will meet in a professional learning community and receive additional coaching.
* Develop expanded tools and resources to support district implementation of deeper learning experiences for all students.
  + Publish a suite of protocols, guidance, learning modules, and artifacts of deeper learning.
  + Expand examples of deeper learning tasks aligned to high-quality instructional materials across all core content areas.
  + Provide additional funding opportunities for schools and districts to support deeper learning implementation.
* Continue DESE’s partnership with Cohort 2 within the Boston Public Schools (BPS) by providing school-based implementation support of deeper learning in alignment with district priorities.
  + Kaleidoscope will continue to provide monthly targeted coaching, professional development, and implementation resources to 15 schools in BPS.
* Continue to pilot DESE’s innovative science assessment in over 100 schools in grades 5 and 8, while ensuring the assessment content aligns to models of rigorous and engaging science instruction in support of DESE’s vision of deeper learning.

**4. Early College and Career Pathways.** The Department will:

* Expand the number of designated Early College and career pathways programs, including “after-dark” vocational programs, by 25%, while continuing support for existing programs.
* Formalize the Office of Early College at DESE, including hiring an Executive Director to oversee this office and launching an Early College strategic policy review to establish a blueprint for advancing this initiative over the next five years.

**5. Improved supports for English learners.** The Department will**:**

* Center the needs of English learners in the adoption and implementation of high-quality instructional materials by 1) creating a toolkit of resources, rubrics, and professional learning on the development of high-quality ESL/ELD curriculum and 2) expand the existing CURATE process with a focus on meeting the needs of English learners.
* Develop a toolkit of supports to help districts and schools effectively meet the academic and socio-emotional needs of increasing numbers of students who are newcomers, refugees, or have experienced limited or interrupted formal education. Improve and streamline DESE’s school- and district-facing supports for English learners by promoting shared responsibility across key DESE offices, including the Statewide System of Support, Kaleidoscope, Digital Learning and Technology, and the Center for Instructional Support in cross-office planning.

**6. IEP improvement project to support students with disabilities.** The Department will finalize and release the redesigned Individualized Education Program (IEP) template and guidance, a multi-year project intended to improve outcomes for students with disabilities across the Commonwealth.

* Continue to engage a representative group of schools and districts that have been serving as “early adopters” of the state’s new IEP to receive feedback on key sections of the new form.
* Continue stakeholder engagement on the new draft IEP to make the final version as inclusive and effective as possible.
* Release a final version of the new IEP in winter 2023 and begin comprehensive training on the new form through the remainder of the school year.

**7. Accelerated learning opportunities.** The Department will continue to promote accelerated learning opportunities for students, including:

* **Acceleration Academies**: Continue to provide students with additional instructional time by funding district-led Acceleration Academies, week-long academic programs designed to accelerate student learning through engaging, standards-aligned lessons. DESE has committed to the following grant programs for SY 2022-23:
  + $1 million in state funds, as well as technical assistance, to support Chelsea, Holyoke, Lawrence, New Bedford, Springfield Empowerment Zone, and Southbridge to implement math and ELA Acceleration Academies.
  + $6 million from the state’s share of federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to support math-focused, vacation week Acceleration Academies.
  + $10 million in ESSER funds to support early literacy and math-focused summer Acceleration Academies.
* **Early literacy tutoring**: Using the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funding, continue to facilitate partnerships between high-needs districts and vetted intensive literacy tutoring providers, including Ignite!, Springboard, Literacy Lab, and Catapult. An estimated 2,500 students will receive tutoring this year through these partnerships. The Department will also explore adding additional opportunities throughout the school year.
* **Afterschool and Summer Programming:** Using ESSER, GEER, and state funding, continue to support grant programs run by districts and community-based programs across the Commonwealth, to mitigate the academic and social-emotional impacts of COVID-19 through access to additional learning and enrichment opportunities.
  + As one example, approximately $20 million in grants will be available to seven regional and statewide non-profit entities that will in turn provide funding and professional development support to an estimated 400 subgrantees. These subgrantee partners will serve over 100,000 students in afterschool and summer programs during SY 2022-23.
* **Biggest Winner Math Challenge program**: Continue to partner with Ed Inquiry to provide culturally affirming, engaging, and rigorous online learning opportunities for middle school students with advanced ability or interest in mathematics, to address "the steep and disproportionate drop-off of academically advanced Black, Hispanic, and/or low-income students between third and sixth grades," as noted in a 2019 report on gifted and talented education in Massachusetts.

**8. Acceleration Roadmap supports.** The Department will continue to support districts and schools to adopt effective learning acceleration practices, including grade-appropriate instruction and sense of belonging. DESE will offer supports for districts and schools to promote further adoption of learning acceleration practices, including:

* Monthly content-specific workshops for instructional leaders, published workshop recordings, and associated resources (available statewide).
* Targeted coaching and implementation support for 20 districts that have requested more in-depth support.
* Planning and delivering a Prioritization and Planning Institute for school and district leaders in the spring of 2023 to support implementation planning for SY 2023-24, including publishing a user-friendly planning guidebook.

**9. Targeted assistance to districts and schools identified in the state accountability system**. The Department will:

* Provide support to the state’s largest district, in line with the 2022 Boston Public Schools (BPS) Systemic Improvement Plan (SIP). The SIP establishes goals for BPS across the following domains: student safety, special education, transportation, facilities, supporting English learners, transformation schools, and data and accountability.
  + Provide technical assistance to support the district in meeting the improvement goals outlined in the SIP and monitor the district’s progress against these targets.
* Continue to provide targeted assistance to other schools and districts performing in the bottom 10 percent of the state’s accountability system, with a focus on supporting effective implementation of culturally responsive grade-appropriate instruction, sense of belonging, and systemic improvement strategies.

**Build a Diverse and Culturally Responsive Workforce**

**1. Educator and administrator cohort learning experiences.** The Department will continue successful cohort learning opportunities that support educators and administrators:

* Continue implementing the Teacher Diversification Professional Learning Community (PLC) to support approximately 100 schools and districts and up to 500 school and district personnel in SY 2022-23. This year-long professional development series supports school and district teams to review their systems and practices to promote a diverse and culturally responsive educator workforce.
* Support the fourth cohort of Influence 100 fellows through a comprehensive two-year program that seeks to diversify the superintendency role in Massachusetts by 100 superintendents in 10 years.

**2. Educator recruitment and retention programs.** The Department will **c**ontinue grant programs to support schools and districts in developing and strengthening teacher recruitment and retention programs.

* Approximately $3 million in grant funding will be awarded in SY 2022-23. Funds enable districts to provide financial incentives (such as signing bonuses and relocation assistance) and financial support (such as MTEL preparation and examination vouchers) to prospective educators from diverse backgrounds.

**3. Support for emergency licensed educators.** The Department willlaunch the inaugural Emergency License Partnership Grant to assist approved educator preparation programs (EPPs) in supporting emergency licensed educators.

* Ten EPPs across the state will receive $125,000 to support emergency licensed educators, including approximately 600 emergency licensed educators in Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lynn, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester.

**4. Revised expectations for educator preparation programs.** In fall 2024, DESE will release revised Program Approval Criteria for EPPs to reflect the expectation that preparation programs will strengthen their practices aimed at preparing culturally responsive educators. To support the rollout of the updated criteria, DESE will**:**

* Engage with external advisory groups from schools, districts, EPPs, and the Educational Personnel Advisory Council to revise the Program Approval Criteria and approval process.
* Hold a series of roundtables in winter 2022 and launch technical assistance sessions and additional resources in spring 2023 to prepare EPPs to understand and address the revised expectations by fall 2024.

**5. Support for districts and schools with staffing challenges.** The Department will continue its initiatives to help districts and schools address staffing challenges. In SY 2022-23 DESE will collect and analyze information on staffing shortages and use it to further target resources and supports to assist schools and districts with staffing needs.

**Cultivate Safe and Healthy Learning Environments**

**1. Mental and behavioral health and wellness.** The Department will continue to promote initiatives to support mental and behavioral health and wellness in districts and schools across the Commonwealth through professional development and grant opportunities as outlined on DESE’s [Mental and Behavioral Health and Wellness Supports](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/mental-wellness/default.html) webpage. These resources include the following:

* Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health grant program ($14 million from state and federal funds).
* Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) Stronger Connections Grant Program ($15 million over four years).
* Safe and Supportive Schools grant program ($600,000).

**2. Emergency Management Plans.** The Department will fulfill its responsibilities under the Mental Health Act signed into law in August 2022, including the provision expanding district and school emergency management plans to encompass behavioral as well as medical health. The Department will:

* Provide information and professional development for districts and schools on developing emergency management plans and threat assessments through partnerships with U.S. Department of Education’s Readiness in Emergency Management in Schools Technical Assistance Center, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, Department of Fire Services, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Department of Mental Health, Department of Public Health, and other agencies.

**3. Continued support for COVID-19 as necessary.** The Department will:

* Continue to provide COVID-19 response supports, such as technical assistance and resources, to schools and districts through the DESE Rapid Response Help Center.
* Continue ongoing collaboration with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Department of Public Health, Department of Mental Health, and other agencies on school health issues to provide schools and districts with up-to-date information and resources.

**Align DESE Supports to a Shared Academic Vision of Deeper Learning**

**1. Develop an academic vision aligned to deeper learning.** The Department willleverage the agency’s Racial Equity Decision-making Tool to develop a shared DESE-wide academic vision and implementation plan, aligning the agency’s work to the vision of deeper learning presented in *Our Way Forward.*

**2. Leverage the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) and federal ESSER funds to promote integrated strategic planning for districts aligned to evidence-based programs**. The Department will:

* Support districts in using disaggregated data to engage in thoughtful strategic planning focused on closing opportunity gaps for underserved student groups.
  + Administer approximately $10 million in grants that enable more districts to effectively implement DESE-approved evidence-based strategies.
  + Develop programs and partnerships to support districts with particular areas of need.
* Continue to monitor and advise districts on the use of SOA and ESSER funds.
* Promote research and evaluation of evidence-based strategies.
  + Analyze and disseminate data and promising practices about the implementation of evidence-based strategies.
  + Conduct program evaluations of several strands of work, including initiatives relating to early literacy, high quality instructional materials, educator workforce, and others.